

# The Complete PPC Pricing Comparison Guide

## What You Should Actually Pay for Google Ads Management in 2025

*From Navu Marketing - Your Guide to Honest PPC Pricing*

---

### How to Use This Guide

This comprehensive guide reveals exactly what different agencies charge for Google Ads management and what you actually get for your money. Use this information to:

- **Evaluate current agency pricing** and identify overpayment
- **Compare proposals** from multiple PPC management providers
- **Negotiate better pricing** based on actual value delivered
- **Avoid common pricing traps** that lock you into overpriced contracts
- **Make informed decisions** about in-house vs. outsourced management

**Important:** Keep this guide handy when evaluating any PPC management proposal. The pricing breakdowns and red flags will save you thousands in overcharges.

---

### Executive Summary: PPC Pricing Reality Check

**The Bottom Line:** Professional Google Ads management should cost between \$749-\$2,000 monthly for most small to medium businesses. Anything over \$3,000 monthly likely includes significant overhead markup that doesn't improve your results.

#### Key Findings:

- 87% of big agency fees go to overhead, not actual PPC work
  - Boutique agencies typically deliver 3x better value per dollar spent
  - Month-to-month agreements consistently outperform long-term contracts
  - Setup fees over \$500 are usually unnecessary revenue grabs
- 

## Section 1: Complete Pricing Breakdown by Provider Type

### Big Agency Pricing Model

**Typical Monthly Fee:** \$2,500 - \$6,000+ **Contract Terms:** 12-24 months with auto-renewal **Setup Fees:** \$1,500 - \$3,000

## Where Your Money Actually Goes:



Expense Category	Monthly Cost	Percentage	What This Pays For
Account Manager Salary	\$800	27%	Person who talks to you (handles 8-12 clients)
Administrative Overhead	\$700	23%	Office rent, fancy furniture, executive salaries
Project Management	\$600	20%	Coordinator between account manager and specialist
Agency Profit Margin	\$600	20%	Pure profit to agency owners
Sales & Marketing Costs	\$300	10%	Cost to acquire you as a client
Actual PPC Specialist Time	\$400	13%	Person who actually works on your campaigns
TOTAL	\$3,000	100%	Only 13% goes to actual Google Ads work

## What You Actually Get:

- **Account Manager:** Handles 8-12 clients, limited PPC knowledge
- **PPC Specialist:** Spends 2-3 hours monthly on your account
- **Monthly Reports:** 15-30 pages of data that doesn't connect to business results
- **Strategy Calls:** With account manager, not the person doing the work
- **Response Time:** 2-5 business days for questions

## Red Flags in Big Agency Pricing:

✗ **Percentage of ad spend models** (15-25% of monthly budget) ✗ **Setup fees over \$1,000** for basic account configuration ✗ **Mandatory 12+ month contracts** with auto-renewal clauses ✗ **Separate charges** for "optimization," "reporting," or "strategy" ✗ **Vague pricing** that requires "custom proposals" for basic services

## Boutique Agency Pricing Model

**Typical Monthly Fee:** \$749 - \$1,800 **Contract Terms:** Month-to-month or 3-6 month agreements

**Setup Fees:** \$0 - \$500 (often included)






## Where Your Money Goes:

Expense Category	Monthly Cost	Percentage	What This Pays For
PPC Specialist Time	\$900	75%	Experienced specialist managing your campaigns
Business Operations	\$200	17%	Basic overhead, tools, software
Profit Margin	\$100	8%	Reasonable profit for sustainable service
TOTAL	<b>\$1,200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75% goes directly to PPC expertise</b>

### What You Actually Get:

- **Direct Specialist Access:** Communicate with the person managing your campaigns
- **Dedicated Attention:** 12-20 hours monthly focused on your account
- **Results-Focused Reporting:** Metrics that connect to business outcomes
- **Strategy Development:** Direct input from experienced PPC specialists
- **Response Time:** Same day or within 24 hours

### Quality Indicators in Boutique Pricing:

 **Transparent fee structures** with clear service inclusions
  **Month-to-month flexibility** showing confidence in results
  **Setup included** in management fees or under \$500
  **Direct specialist access** without account manager markup
  **Results-based reporting** focused on business metrics

### Freelancer Pricing Model

**Typical Monthly Fee:** \$500 - \$1,500 **Contract Terms:** Project-based or monthly retainers **Setup Fees:** \$0 - \$300

### Where Your Money Goes:

Expense Category	Monthly Cost	Percentage	What This Pays For
Freelancer Time	\$800	80%	Direct PPC work by individual specialist
Tools & Software	\$100	10%	Google Ads tools, reporting software
Profit/Living Wage	\$100	10%	Freelancer's business profit
TOTAL	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>80% goes to PPC work</b>

### What You Actually Get:

- **Direct Access:** Work directly with the PPC specialist
- **Focused Attention:** Often handle 5-10 clients maximum
- **Flexible Approach:** Can adapt quickly to your business needs
- **Cost Efficiency:** Lower overhead means better value per dollar

## Freelancer Considerations:

### Pros:

- Lowest overhead costs
- Direct communication
- Often more responsive
- Flexible pricing

### Cons:

- Limited bandwidth for complex accounts
- No backup if unavailable
- May lack enterprise tools/experience
- Income dependent on individual's skills

### Best For:

- Monthly ad budgets under \$10,000
  - Simple campaign structures
  - Businesses wanting to learn alongside implementation
  - Companies prioritizing cost efficiency
- 

## Section 2: Pricing Model Comparison

### Fixed Monthly Fee vs. Percentage of Spend

#### Fixed Monthly Fee Model ☒ **RECOMMENDED**

**How It Works:** You pay the same monthly management fee regardless of ad spend changes.

**Example:** \$1,200/month whether you spend \$5,000 or \$15,000 on ads

### Pros:

- Predictable budgeting
- No conflict of interest (agency doesn't benefit from higher spend)
- Scales efficiently as your business grows
- Easier to compare proposals

## Cons:

- May seem expensive for very small budgets
- Doesn't automatically scale with account complexity

**Best For:** Most businesses with consistent ad spend goals

---

## Percentage of Ad Spend Model ✗ **AVOID**

**How It Works:** Agency charges 10-25% of your monthly ad spend.

**Example:** 15% fee on \$10,000 ad spend = \$1,500 monthly management fee

### Why Agencies Love This Model:

- Automatic fee increases when you scale campaigns
- Higher spend = higher profits without additional work
- Creates incentive to increase your ad spend

### Why You Should Avoid It:

- **Conflict of Interest:** Agency benefits from higher spend, not better results
- **Unpredictable Costs:** Management fees fluctuate with ad spend
- **Scaling Penalty:** You pay more as campaigns succeed
- **No Value Correlation:** Management complexity doesn't increase with spend

**Red Flag Example:** Business spending \$50,000/month on ads with 15% management fee pays \$7,500 monthly for the same work that costs \$1,500 on a fixed fee model.

---

## Section 3: Hidden Costs and Fee Structures

### Setup Fees Analysis

#### Reasonable Setup Fees (\$0-\$500)

#### What's Included:

- Account audit and restructuring
- Initial keyword research
- Campaign architecture planning
- Conversion tracking setup

- Basic optimization



**Why It's Fair:** Represents actual time investment in account setup (8-12 hours of specialist time).

---

## **Overpriced Setup Fees (\$1,000-\$3,000)**

### **Red Flags:**

- Charges for "proprietary auditing tools"
- Separate fees for keyword research
- "Strategic planning" charges
- Multiple setup components billed separately

**Reality:** These fees often subsidize sales costs and don't provide additional value.

---

## **Contract Terms Comparison**

### **Month-to-Month Agreements BEST**

#### **Benefits:**

- Agency accountability for ongoing results
- Flexibility to adjust or cancel based on performance
- No penalties for scaling up or down
- Demonstrates agency confidence in their service

**What This Tells You:** The agency is confident they'll deliver results that justify continued partnership.

---

### **3-6 Month Agreements ACCEPTABLE**

#### **When It Makes Sense:**

- Allows time for proper optimization and testing
- May include discounted setup or management fees
- Reasonable timeframe for seeing results

#### **Watch Out For:**

- Auto-renewal clauses
- Cancellation penalties
- Rigid terms that don't account for business changes

---

## 12+ Month Contracts ✕ AVOID

### Why Agencies Want This:

- Guaranteed revenue regardless of performance
- Difficult for clients to leave poor service
- Often includes auto-renewal traps

### Why You Should Avoid:

- Removes agency accountability
  - Prevents quick pivots when strategies aren't working
  - Often includes penalty fees for early termination
- 

## Section 4: Regional Pricing Variations

### Major Metropolitan Areas

**Typical Range:** \$1,000 - \$4,000 monthly **Why Higher:** Increased operating costs, higher specialist salaries **Reality Check:** Premium shouldn't exceed 20-30% over national averages

### Mid-Size Cities

**Typical Range:** \$750 - \$2,500 monthly

**Sweet Spot:** Often best value for professional expertise **Advantage:** Lower overhead with access to qualified specialists

### Small Markets/Rural Areas

**Typical Range:** \$500 - \$1,500 monthly **Considerations:** May have limited local expertise **Options:** Remote agencies often provide better value

**Important:** Geographic location shouldn't dramatically impact pricing for Google Ads management since most work is done remotely.

---

## Section 5: Budget-Based Pricing Guidelines

### Monthly Ad Spend: Under \$2,000

**Recommended Management Fee:** \$500 - \$749 **Best Options:** Experienced freelancers or boutique agencies **Key Considerations:**

- Management fee shouldn't exceed 30-40% of ad spend
  - Focus on specialists with small business experience
  - Prioritize direct access over agency hierarchy
- 

### **Monthly Ad Spend: \$2,000 - \$5,000**

**Recommended Management Fee:** \$749 - \$1,200 **Best Options:** Boutique agencies with proven results **Key Considerations:**

- Look for month-to-month agreements
  - Ensure direct specialist access
  - Request case studies from similar businesses
- 

### **Monthly Ad Spend: \$5,000 - \$15,000**

**Recommended Management Fee:** \$1,200 - \$2,000 **Best Options:** Experienced boutique agencies or large agency alternatives **Key Considerations:**

- May justify more comprehensive service
  - Should include advanced optimization and testing
  - Multiple campaign management expertise important
- 

### **Monthly Ad Spend: \$15,000+**

**Recommended Management Fee:** \$1,800 - \$3,000 **Best Options:** Senior specialists or enterprise-focused agencies **Key Considerations:**

- Complex account management expertise crucial
  - May require dedicated specialist attention
  - Advanced reporting and analysis important
- 

## **Section 6: What's Included vs. What Costs Extra**

### **Should Be Included in Base Management Fee**

#### **Campaign Management** ☒

- Daily performance monitoring
- Bid management and optimization



- Budget allocation across campaigns
- Negative keyword management
- Quality Score optimization

### Ad Creation and Testing ✓

- Monthly ad copy creation
- A/B testing setup and analysis
- Ad extension management
- Responsive search ad optimization

### Reporting and Communication ✓

- Monthly performance reports
- Strategy recommendations
- Regular communication/calls
- Performance analysis and insights

### Technical Setup ✓

- Conversion tracking implementation
- Google Analytics integration
- Campaign structure optimization
- Initial keyword research

---

## Legitimate Additional Costs

### Landing Page Creation 💰

**Typical Cost:** \$500 - \$2,000 per page **When Worth It:** If current pages have poor conversion rates

**Alternative:** Recommendations for internal development

### Advanced Conversion Tracking 💰

**Typical Cost:** \$300 - \$800 setup **When Worth It:** Complex attribution requirements **Include:** Phone call tracking, offline conversion import

### Additional Platform Management 💰

**Typical Cost:** \$300 - \$800 per additional platform **When Worth It:** Microsoft Ads, Facebook Ads expansion **Fair Pricing:** Should be discounted from full management fee

---



## Red Flag Additional Charges ✕

### "Premium" Optimization ✕

**What They Claim:** Advanced optimization beyond basic management **Reality:** Optimization should be included in base fee

### Monthly Reporting Fees ✕

**What They Claim:** Detailed reporting and analysis **Reality:** Reporting is part of management, not an add-on

### Strategy Consultation Charges ✕

**What They Claim:** Strategic planning and recommendations **Reality:** Strategy development should be included

### Software and Tool Fees ✕

**What They Claim:** Access to "proprietary" or premium tools **Reality:** Tool costs should be built into management fees

---

## Section 7: Pricing Red Flags and Warning Signs

### Immediate Red Flags 🚩

#### Pricing That Requires Multiple Meetings to Understand

**Red Flag:** "We need to understand your needs before providing pricing" **Reality:** Basic PPC management pricing should be straightforward **What to Do:** Ask for standard rate card or typical pricing ranges

#### Percentage of Ad Spend Over 15%

**Red Flag:** "We charge 20% of your monthly ad spend" **Reality:** No correlation between spend level and management complexity **What to Do:** Request fixed monthly fee alternative

#### Setup Fees Over \$1,000

**Red Flag:** "\$2,500 for comprehensive account setup and audit" **Reality:** Setup rarely requires more than 15 hours of work **What to Do:** Ask for itemized breakdown of setup tasks

**Red Flag:** "All clients sign 12-month agreements with auto-renewal" **Reality:** Confident agencies offer month-to-month terms **What to Do:** Request month-to-month alternative or maximum 6-month term

---

## Pricing Manipulation Tactics

### The Bait and Switch

**How It Works:** Low initial quote that increases after "comprehensive audit" **Example:** "\$1,200/month" becomes "\$2,800/month after we see your account complexity" **Protection:** Get written quote for specific services before signing

### The Feature Creep

**How It Works:** Basic package missing essential services **Example:** Reporting, optimization, or ad creation cost extra **Protection:** Ensure quote includes all necessary management tasks

### The Complexity Justification

**How It Works:** Everything about your account is "more complex than usual" **Example:** "Your industry requires specialized expertise" (20% upcharge) **Protection:** Ask for specific complexity factors and why they increase costs

### The Tool Subscription Trap

**How It Works:** Agency bills you for software they'd use anyway **Example:** "\$200/month for advanced bidding software access" **Protection:** Tool costs should be built into management fees

---

## Section 8: How to Evaluate and Compare Proposals

### Essential Questions to Ask Every Provider

#### About Pricing Structure

1. "What exactly is included in your monthly management fee?"
2. "Are there any additional costs I should expect?"
3. "How do you handle contract terms and cancellation policies?"
4. "What happens if I want to scale my ad spend up or down?"

#### About Service Delivery

1. "Who will actually be managing my campaigns day-to-day?"

2. "How many other accounts does that person manage?"
3. "How often will we communicate about performance?"
4. "What's your typical response time for questions?"

### **About Results and Accountability**

1. "Can you provide case studies from similar businesses?"
  2. "What metrics do you prioritize in your reporting?"
  3. "How do you handle underperforming campaigns?"
  4. "What's your average client retention rate?"
- 

## **Proposal Evaluation Scorecard**

Rate each provider on a scale of 1-5 for each factor:

### **Pricing Transparency (Weight: 25%)**

- Clear, itemized pricing structure
- No hidden fees or surprise charges
- Reasonable contract terms
- Fair pricing relative to market

### **Expertise and Experience (Weight: 30%)**

- Relevant industry experience
- Google Ads certifications
- Quality of case studies
- Specialist qualifications

### **Service Quality (Weight: 25%)**

- Direct access to specialists
- Reasonable response times
- Comprehensive service inclusion
- Professional communication

### **Results and Accountability (Weight: 20%)**

- Proven track record

- Results-focused reporting
- Client retention rates
- Performance guarantees or commitments

#### Scoring:

- **18-20 points:** Excellent choice
  - **15-17 points:** Good option worth considering
  - **12-14 points:** Acceptable but compare alternatives
  - **Below 12 points:** Look elsewhere
- 

## Section 9: Navu's Transparent Pricing Breakdown

### Why We Charge \$749 Monthly

At Navu, our pricing is based on the actual time and expertise required to deliver results, not market manipulation or overhead markup.

#### Exact Cost Breakdown:

- **Google Ads Specialist Time:** 15-18 hours monthly × \$45/hour = \$675
- **Tools and Software:** \$25 monthly
- **Business Operations:** \$35 monthly
- **Reasonable Profit Margin:** \$14 monthly
- **Total:** \$749 monthly

#### What This Pricing Includes:

☒ **Complete Campaign Management:** Setup, optimization, monitoring ☒ **Ad Creation and Testing:** Monthly ad development and A/B testing ☒ **Performance Reporting:** Results-focused analysis and recommendations ☒ **Direct Specialist Access:** Communicate with campaign managers directly ☒ **Conversion Tracking:** Setup and maintenance included ☒ **Strategy Development:** Ongoing optimization and planning ☒ **No Setup Fees:** Account setup included in first month ☒ **Month-to-Month Terms:** No long-term contract requirements

#### What Sets Our Pricing Apart:

- **No Account Manager Markup:** Direct access to PPC specialists
- **No Hidden Fees:** Everything included in stated price

- **No Contract Traps:** Month-to-month flexibility
- **No Percentage Games:** Fixed fee regardless of ad spend changes
- **No Tool Charges:** All necessary software included

## Comparison: Navu vs. Typical Agency

Service Component	Typical Agency	Navu
Monthly Management	\$2,500	\$749
Setup Fee	\$1,500	\$0
Contract Terms	12 months	Month-to-month
Specialist Access	Through account manager	Direct
Response Time	2-3 business days	Same day
Total First Year	\$31,500	\$8,988
Savings with Navu		<b>\$22,512</b>

## Section 10: Making Your Decision

### When to Choose Navu (\$749/month)

#### Perfect For:

- Monthly ad budgets between \$1,000 - \$25,000
- Businesses wanting direct specialist access
- Companies preferring month-to-month flexibility
- Organizations tired of agency overhead and markup
- Businesses wanting transparent, honest pricing

#### Our Clients Typically:

- Value expertise over impressive presentations
- Want results, not just reports
- Prefer working directly with specialists
- Need responsive, professional service
- Want to avoid long-term contract traps

### When to Consider Alternatives

#### Very Small Budgets (Under \$1,000/month):

- Experienced freelancer might provide better value
- Management fees would consume too much of budget
- Consider learning DIY initially

**Very Large Budgets (Over \$50,000/month):**

- May require dedicated full-time management
- Complex attribution and reporting needs
- Multiple platform coordination requirements

**Highly Specialized Industries:**

- May need deep vertical expertise
  - Compliance requirements (legal, medical, financial)
  - Industry-specific tools and processes
- 

**Conclusion: The True Cost of Google Ads Management**

The PPC management industry has made pricing intentionally confusing to justify higher fees. But the math is simple:

**Professional Google Ads management requires:**

- 15-20 hours of specialist time monthly
- Basic tools and software
- Reasonable business profit margin

**This should cost:** \$749 - \$1,500 monthly for most businesses

**Anything significantly higher includes:**

- Account manager markup
- Administrative overhead
- Sales and marketing costs
- Excessive profit margins

**Your Next Steps**

1. **Audit Your Current Costs:** Use this guide to evaluate existing agency pricing
2. **Compare Proposals:** Apply the evaluation framework to new options

3. **Ask Direct Questions:** Use our suggested questions to uncover hidden costs
4. **Prioritize Value:** Focus on results per dollar spent, not lowest absolute cost
5. **Demand Transparency:** Work only with providers who clearly explain their pricing

## Ready for Honest PPC Management?

If you're tired of agency markup and want transparent Google Ads management that focuses on results rather than impressive presentations, we'd love to help.

### Get Your Free Google Ads Audit:

- Account performance analysis
- Cost savings identification
- Custom optimization recommendations
- Honest assessment of improvement potential

### Schedule Your Free Audit

**Questions About This Guide?** Contact us directly at [email] for clarification on any pricing concepts or comparisons.

---

**About This Guide:** Created by Navu Marketing based on analysis of 500+ PPC management proposals and 3+ years of helping businesses escape overpriced agency contracts. All pricing data based on actual market research conducted in 2024-2025.

**Share This Guide:** Help other businesses avoid PPC pricing manipulation by sharing this guide with your network.

---

*Last Updated: July 2025*